

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

LONG-TERM CONTRACT RENEWAL FOR
LEWIS CREEK WATER DISTRICT

Recommended by:

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February 24, 2005
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BACKGROUND

In accordance with Section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the Mid-Pacific Region of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has found that the execution of the Long-Term Water Service Contract for Lewis Creek Water District of the Central Valley Project (CVP) will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment thus an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Reclamation has reviewed the 2001 *Friant Division Long-Term Contract Renewal* Environmental Assessment in preparation of this Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI).

The decision is to renew the Lewis Creek Water District Contract for a period of 25 years, effective 2005 through 2030. The EA analyzed a renewal period of 2001 through 2026. Since all impacts of the contract are expected to be manifested by 2025 there is no discernable difference in impacts with the contract period versus what was analyzed in the EA. Because full use of the contract water-supply would occur by 2025, all environmental affects within Lewis Creek Water District's water-service area related to this contract renewal will have occurred by year 2025. Because the full water-contract amount would already be in use, any contract-renewal environmental-effects occurring at year 2025 would not increase in magnitude or change in scope after that date.

Section 3409 of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act of 1992 (CVPIA) stipulates that Reclamation must prepare and complete a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), pursuant to NEPA, analyzing the direct and indirect impacts and benefits associated with the implementation of the CVPIA. This was completed with the Record of Decision signed on January 9, 2001.

In accordance with Section 3404(c) of the CVPIA, authorization of long-term contract renewals (LTCRs) also requires appropriate environmental review. This was the subject of the Friant Division Long-Term Contract Renewal EA (Friant EA), which tiered from the CVPIA PEIS. The PEIS addressed the impacts and benefits of implementing the CVPIA provisions CVP-wide and allowed subsequent environmental documents to tier from and to incorporate the PEIS analysis. The Friant EA analyzed localized impacts of continued water deliveries of 1,450 acre feet per year (af/y) of Class 1 Friant CVP water to Lewis Creek Water District (LCWD), resulting from the 25-year long-term contract. The Friant EA assumed the 25-year period would begin in 2001 and end in 2026. However, LCWD has not signed their long-term contract. For the purposes of this FONSI, the 25-year period is anticipated to begin in 2005 and end 2031.

The approval and long-term contract would be consistent with the provisions in the CVPIA. This Proposed Action is necessary to continue water deliveries to existing CVP contractors for agricultural, municipal and industrial purposes.

The Friant EA and the scope of the analysis were developed consistent with regulations and Council of Environmental Quality. The analysis in the EA finds that the renewal of the contract is, in essence, a continuation of the "status quo". Although there are financial and administrative changes to the contracts, they perpetuate the existing use and allocation of resources (i.e. the same amount of water is being provided to the same lands for existing/ongoing purposes). The analysis in the EA, therefore, addresses the proposed changes to the contract and the potential environmental effects of those changes. As indicated in the incorporated by referenced Friant EA and in this FONSI, Reclamation has found that these contract changes would not result in significant impacts on the environment.

FINDINGS

In accordance with NEPA and its implementing regulations and consistent with the analysis in the Friant EA, the Mid-Pacific Region of Reclamation has found that the Proposed Action to renew a long-term contract for water service for LCWD is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Consequently, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is supported by the following factors:

1. **Surface Water Resources** – Under the proposed action, CVP operations and use amounts would remain the same as existing conditions for LCWD. The Proposed Action would have no effect on total water supply. No additional water supplies would be delivered and uses would remain consistent. Therefore, no significant impacts would occur to surface water resources as a result of this action.
2. **Groundwater Resources** – LCWD would continue managing available surface water and groundwater as in the past. During dry periods, more groundwater is likely to be pumped when economically beneficial or when CVP water is limited. Providing surface water supplies to 2031 could result in slight benefits to groundwater resources depending upon hydrology between years 2026 and 2031. No significant changes to, or impacts to groundwater would occur as a result of the Proposed Action.
3. **Water Quality** - The proposed LTCR would not change surface or groundwater quality from existing conditions. The water delivered under this proposed action is small and is of high enough quality to not lead to discernable changes in surface or groundwater quality.
4. **Fisheries** – The Proposed Action is expected to use CVP surface water in historic amounts and patterns. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no impacts on fishery resources relative to the no action alternative.
5. **Land Use Resources** – The Proposed Action would not result in growth-inducing impacts because there would be no changes to CVP operations or contract amounts beyond the 1,450 af/y of water. Relatively small and insignificant decreases in irrigation acreage (less than two percent) are expected with changing climatic

conditions from wet to dry years. The Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts or changes to land use.

6. Biological Resources – The Proposed Action, relative to the No Action Alternative, does not increase the water service contract amounts, require additional facilities (dams, canals, etc.), or convert natural habitat to farmland. Consequently, the continued historic operations under the Proposed Action would not result in any changes to the area's biological resources.

7. Threatened and Endangered Species - Consultation pursuant to the Endangered Species Act has been completed for the Proposed Action. Based on these completed consultations, Reclamation has determined the Proposed Action will have not significant effect to listed species.

8. Recreational Resources – Recreational opportunities would remain unchanged. CVP facilities and operations would not change as a result of the renewal of the long-term contracts. The Proposed Action would have no impacts to recreation in the region.

9. Socioeconomic Resources – The Proposed Action would have a less than significant effect on socio-economical resources. The largest variations seen in irrigated acres, gross revenue, net revenue, and employment in the region occur as a result of changes in the weather and commodity demands. The changes associated with dry years include reductions of irrigated acres by less than two percent, gross revenue by less than one percent, and decreases in employment by less than one percent.

10. Cultural Resources – The Proposed Action will not result in impacts to eligible or significant cultural resources because no additional infrastructure would be constructed and no land use changes or conversions into farmland or other uses are proposed. In addition, there would be no increase in deliveries, land use changes, or conversion of existing natural habitat into farmland or other uses.

11. Social Conditions – The Proposed Action does not change the CVP management, facilities operation, or result in any new construction of additional facilities. Independent of the Proposed Action, present high unemployment rates would continue for the area. Agriculture would remain a large employer in the San Joaquin Valley and in LCWD. This small amount of water (1,450 af/y) would not result in significant changes to social conditions or unemployment rates.

12. Air Quality – The Proposed Action would not change existing CVP facilities or operations, or result in construction of new facilities. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no significant impacts on air quality.

13. Geology and Soils – The Proposed Action relative to the No Action Alternative would continue CVP water deliveries to LCWD with no change in the contract amount. There would be no new construction of facilities and operations which would affect soil erosion. CVP operations and flows would continue to be conducted to prevent scouring and bank erosion. The Proposed Action would have no identifiable impacts upon geology or soils.

14. Visual Resources – The Proposed Action would not result in construction of new facilities or land disturbing activities that could alter the visual environment. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not have a significant effect on the service area's unique or scenic landscape features. General cultivated and fallowed acreage patterns are expected to be similar to historic patterns, with fully planted crop coverage on retired or fallow lands in the last year of cultivation. The Proposed Action would have no significant effect on visual resources.

15. Environmental Justice – The Proposed Action would not have a disproportionately high adverse effect on any one ethnic group compared to another, including land owners, farmers, and farm workers. However, any change would reflect more on individuals and skill levels who are generally economically disadvantaged. The Proposed Action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse or environmental effect on minority or low-income populations.

16. Indian Trust Assets – The Proposed Action relative to the No Action Alternative would continue CVP water deliveries with no change to the contract amount. There is no change in CVP management, reservoir operations, or facilities that would interfere with existing Indian Trust Assets (ITAs) water rights or diversions.